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DOCTOR STRANGE
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
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TM
NOW! THE MOST DEADLY MYSTIC COMBAT OF ALL!
DOCTOR STRANGE VERSUS DOCTOR STRANGE?!

Once he was a man like most *others*— a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like no other—a man who left us *behind*, as he strove to stand against the unseen subtle perils hovering *thick* and *black* around our fragile existence...

Stan Lee presents: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

JIM STARLIN · SCRIPT · AL MILGROM & PABLO MARCOS · ART · ALAN KUPPERBERG · LETTERS · SAM KATO · COLORS · ARCHIE GOODWIN · EDITOR

DRIFTING... HANGING LIKE ENTANGLED PUPPETS AMIDST A TERRIBLE VOID. NO REASON TO DO ANYTHING ELSE.
THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY HAS STRUCK. NOTHING MATTERS NOW. EVERYTHING THAT WAS, IS GONE, SAVE A LONE VOICE THAT CRIES:
STEPHEN!!

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A VOCAL REALITY THAT REFUSES TO BE IGNORED.
STEPHEN, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
CLEA... WONG... WHAT ARE... YOU DOING... HERE?
MASTER, WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
HAPPENED...? OH NOT MUCH...
...JUST EVERYTHING!
SUDDENLY THE STUNNED MYSTIC IS SHOCKED BACK TO FULL AWARENESS BY...
THE REALM OF THE CREATORS ...COLLAPSING NOW THAT THEY HAVE DEPARTED!
WE MUST DO LIKEWISE!
BUT WHAT OF YOUR UNCONSCIOUS COMPANIONS?
FEAR NOT, CLEA, I'LL NOT ABANDON THEM.
BUT I'LL NEED TO DRAW UPON YOUR STRENGTH TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.
EXCELLENT! WITH YOUR AID I NOW HAVE THE POWER TO CAST THE NECESSARY SPELLS WHICH WILL...
...OPEN AN ESCAPEWAY FROM THE DYING DOMAIN OF THE CREATORS TO OUR OWN SPHERE OF REALITY, THROUGH WHICH DR. STRANGE, CLEA, WONG AND A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS LINE OF INERT FIGURES FLEE.

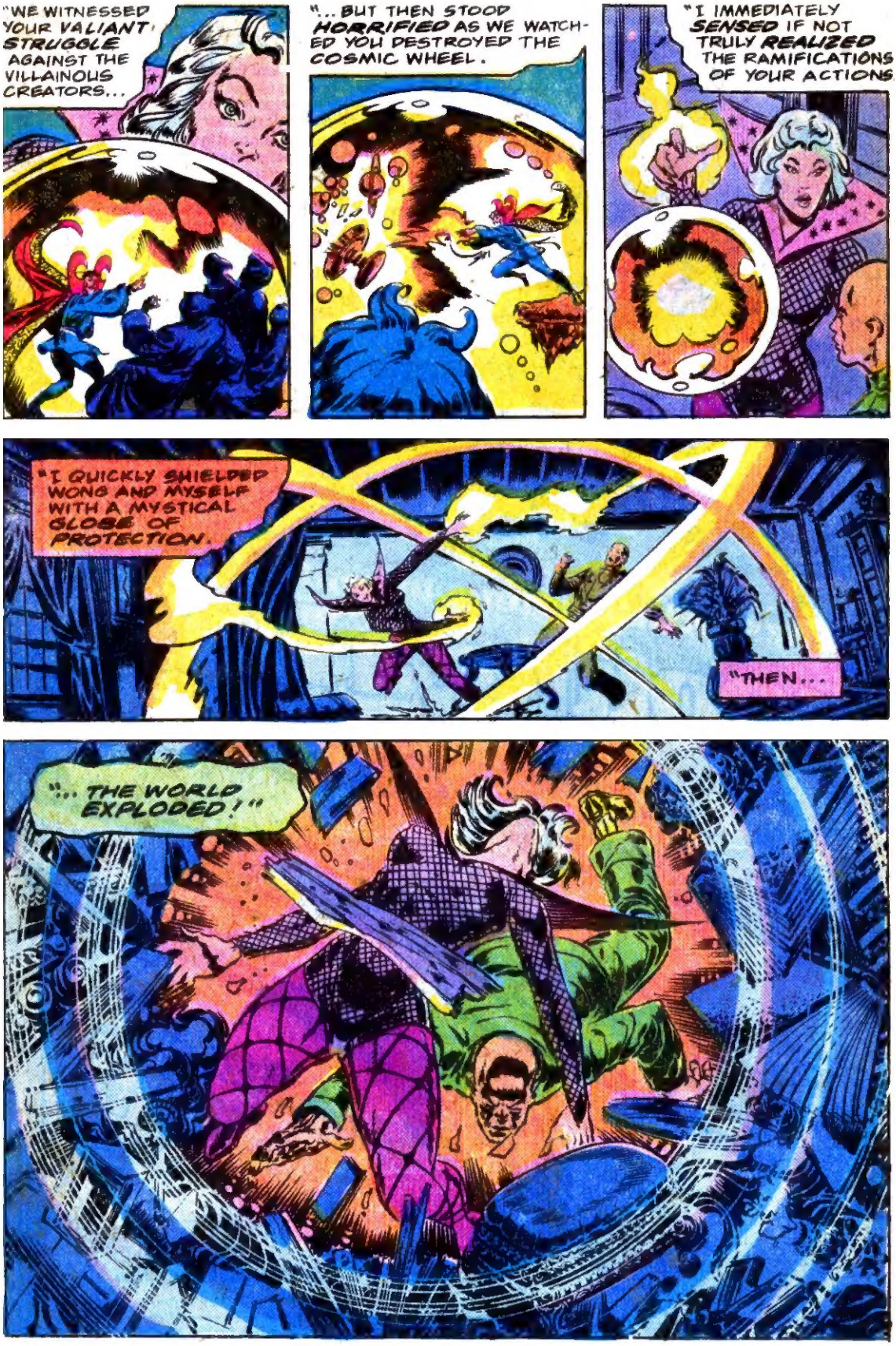
ONCE ALL ARE SAFE, THE MASTER OF MYSTIC ARTS SETS HIS UNCONSCIOUS FOLLOWING INTO ORBIT AROUND A LARGE PLANET OF THE STAR WHICH WAS ONCE ALPHA CENTAURI.
THE MAGE AND HIS TWO REMAINING COMPANIONS THEN RETIRE TO A NEARBY ASTEROID.
I MUST REST.
EVEN WITH YOUR AID, CLEA, WHAT I HAVE JUST ACCOMPLISHED LEAVES ME DRAINED...
...EMPTY!
STEPHEN... PLEASE ...WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
I HAVE FAILED MY GALAXY.
AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE BEEN STRIVING TO THWART THE EVIL PLANS OF THE CREATORS.
"THESE FIENDS, I DISCOVERED, HAD CALLED INTO POWER A MYSTIC DEVICE CALLED THE COSMIC WHEEL OF CHANGE.

"THIS DIABOLICAL APPARATUS HAD THE ABILITY TO ALTER THE HEAVENS. IT WAS SLOWLY PULLING THE STARS FROM THE NIGHT AND REPLACING THEM WITH SICKLY BLUE GEMS OF DARKNESS WHICH, IN FACT, WERE THE CREATORS IN THE FORM OF STARS.
"ONCE IN THIS STATE, TOTAL POWER WOULD BE THEIRS, FOR SUNS ARE THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF ALL ENERGY: ELECTRIC, ATOMIC, EVEN MYSTIC. CONTROL OF THE SOURCE MEANT THAT ALL THINGS IN THE GALAXY WOULD BE VICTIMIZED BY THEIR TYRANNY.
"I VOWED TO STOP THEIR MADNESS AND LOCATED AN ENTRANCE TO THEIR REALM THROUGH A DIMENSION CALLED THE QUAD-RIVERSE.
"ONCE THERE, I JOINED FORCES WITH A STAR IN HUMAN GUISE CALLED APALLA, WHO ALSO SOUGHT THE DOWNFALL OF THE CREATORS.
"TOGETHER WE BATTLED THE CREATORS AND WOULD PROBABLY HAVE WON THE DAY...
"...HAD I NOT SUDDENLY, AND QUITE IRRATIONALLY, FIRED TWIN BOLTS OF DESTRUCTION AT THE COSMIC WHEEL.
"WITH THE WHEEL DESTROYED, THE DESTINY OF THE STARS BECAME DETERMINED BY THE FICKLE GUIDANCE OF RANDOM CHANCE.

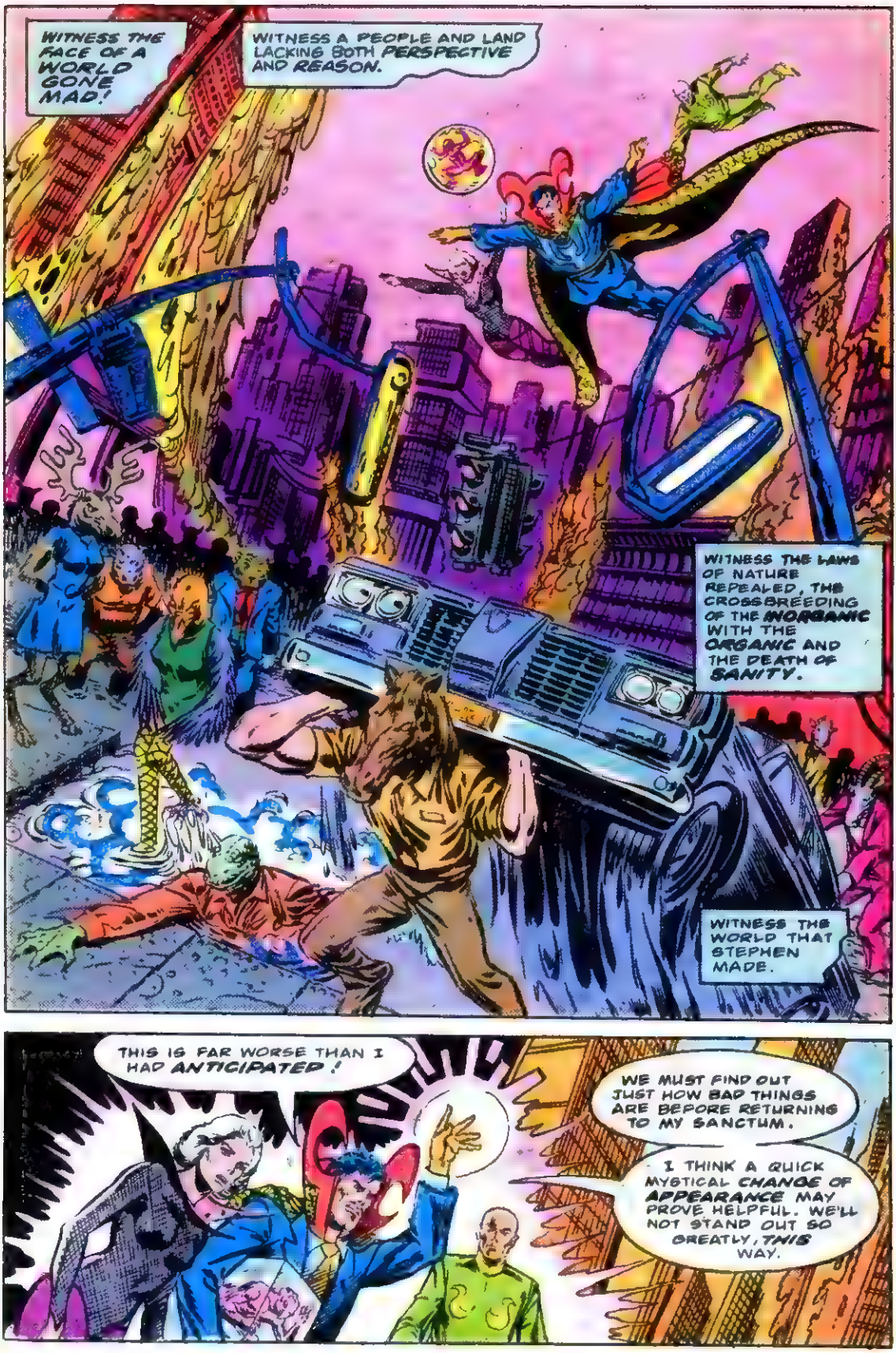
"AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT, THE WHEEL'S DESTRUCTION MERELY HASTENED THE COMPLETION OF THE CREATORS' PLANS.
"IN A FLASH, THE REMAINING CREATORS WERE TRANSFORMED INTO STARS AND TOOK THEIR PLACE IN THE DARK SKY, WHILE THE TRUE STARS WERE FORCED INTO HUMAN FORM SO THAT A COSMIC BALANCE WOULD BE MAINTAINED."
THE ENTIRE AFFAIR IS SO LIKE A BAD DREAM.
YET THE STRANGELY GLOWING STARS ABOUT US PLAINLY ILLUMINATE THAT SUCH IS NOT THE CASE.
WHAT OF THE OLD STARS, MASTER?
I THINK IT BEST I KEEP THEM ENTRANCED AND OUT OF HARM'S WAY FOR NOW.
BESIDES, I FEAR THEY WOULD NOT LOOK KINDLY ON ME FOR MY PART IN PUTTING THEM IN THEIR CURRENT SITUATION.
STEPHEN ... WHY?
WHY DID I ACT IN SO RECKLESS A MANNER?
I DON'T KNOW.
WITHIN THE LAST FEW HOURS I HAVE BEEN PLAGUED BY FITS OF ANGER... CARELESSNESS... MADNESS...
I HAVE EVEN KILLED! AS YOU KNOW, THAT IS SOMETHING I'VE VOWED NEVER TO DO!
I BELIEVE IT IS TIME I LEARNED THE REASONS FOR MY BIZARRE BEHAVIOR.
SILENCE, PLEASE.

SECONDS OF SILENT MEDITATION STRETCH INTO MINUTES WHICH BECOME HOURS...
...AS THE MAN CALLED STRANGE SIFTS THROUGH THE PASSAGEWAY OF HIS SELF IN SEARCH OF THE FLAW RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS INEXPLICABLE ACTIONS.
SUDDENLY THE MYSTIC EYE OF AGAMOTTO LEVITATES FORTH FROM THE MAGE'S AMULET AND BATHES HIM IN AN EERIE LIGHT WHICH...
...EXPOSES THE HIDDEN WORKINGS OF STRANGES NERVOUS SYSTEM.
THERE HE FINDS THAT WHICH HE HAS SOUGHT.
THE EYE RETURNS TO ITS RESTING PLACE AND DR. STRANGE STEELS HIMSELF FOR WHAT HE KNOWS WHAT MUST COME NEXT.
HIS HAND TENSES, AS IF IN READINESS TO GRASP SOMETHING.
THEN, BEFORE THE HORRIFIED EYES OF HIS TWO DEAR FRIENDS...
...THE MYSTIC PLUNGES HIS HAND INTO HIS CHEST CAVITY...
...AND PULLS FORTH A GROTESQUELY FAMILIAR SQUIRMING SHAPE.
BY DORMAMMU'S DEMONS!
MASTER, WHAT IS IT?
I DON'T KNOW.

BUT I DO REMEMBER SEEING THIS LITTLE FELLOW WHEN I FIRST ENTERED THE QUADRIVERSE.*
I GLANCED AWAY FROM IT FOR A MOMENT AND WHEN I LOOKED BACK, IT WAS GONE. I WONDERED WHERE IT HAD GOTTEN TO.
WELL, NOW I KNOW.
I'D BETTER ENCASE HIM IN A MYSTIC CAGE AND TAKE HIM BACK TO MY SANCTUM SANCTORUM FOR LATER STUDY!
*SEE DR. S. #23, SPLASH PAGE--ARCHIE.
THEN WE'RE RETURNING HOME?!
YES, I THINK THAT WOULD BE THE BEST PLACE FOR ME TO CONSIDER WHAT LIES AHEAD.
STEPHEN, I'M NOT SURE THERE IS A HOME FOR US TO RETURN TO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
AFTER WE HAD A VISIT FROM APALLA WHO CAME SEARCHING FOR YOU AT YOUR GREENWICH VILLAGE DOMICILE...
...WONG AND I DECIDED IT WOULD BE WISE TO KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON YOU THROUGH THE ORB OF AGAMOTTO.

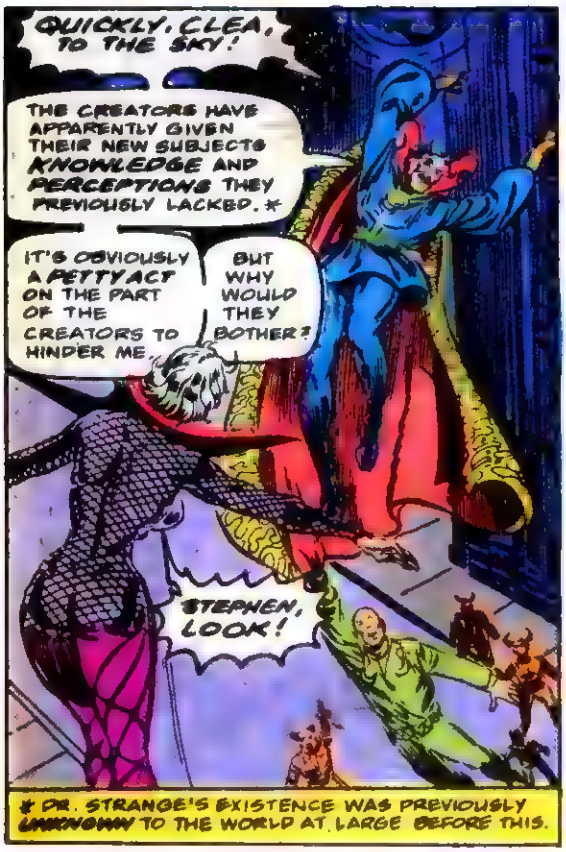

"WE WITNESSED YOUR VALIANT STRUGGLE AGAINST THE VILLAINOUS CREATORS...
"...BUT THEN STOOD HORRIFIED AS WE WATCHED YOU DESTROYED THE COSMIC WHEEL.
"I IMMEDIATELY SENSED IF NOT TRULY REALIZED THE RAMIFICATIONS OF YOUR ACTIONS
"I QUICKLY SHIELDED WONG AND MYSELF WITH A MYSTICAL GLOBE OF PROTECTION.
"THEN...
"...THE WORLD EXPLODED!"

IT SHATTERED INTO A BILLION SHARDS, THEN SUDDENLY REVERSED AND REFORMED ITSELF INTO... INTO...
...INTO SOMETHING INDESCRIBABLE.
CLEA... I'M SORRY.
BELOW US, LOOK!
IT'S EARTH. IT APPEARS LITTLE CHANGED FROM HERE.
BUT LOOK, STEPHEN, AS YOU GET CLOSER, THE CHANGE BECOMES MORE APPARENT.
YES, MANHATTAN'S SKYLINE IS INDEED CHANGED. STRANGE NEW BUILDINGS STAND AMIDST OLDER, MORE FAMILIAR TOWERS.
LET US DROP DOWN TO STREET LEVEL AND...
BY THE VAPORS OF VALTORR!
AM I RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS?


WITNESS THE FACE OF A WORLD GONE MAD!
WITNESS A PEOPLE AND LAND LACKING BOTH PERSPECTIVE AND REASON.
WITNESS THE LAWS OF NATURE REPEALED, THE CROSSBREEDING OF THE INORGANIC WITH THE ORGANIC AND THE DEATH OF SANITY.
WITNESS THE WORLD THAT STEPHEN MADE.
THIS IS FAR WORSE THAN I HAD ANTICIPATED!
WE MUST FIND OUT JUST HOW BAD THINGS ARE BEFORE RETURNING TO MY SANCTUM.
I THINK A QUICK MYSTICAL CHANGE OF APPEARANCE MAY PROVE HELPFUL. WE'LL NOT STAND OUT SO GREATLY, THIS WAY.

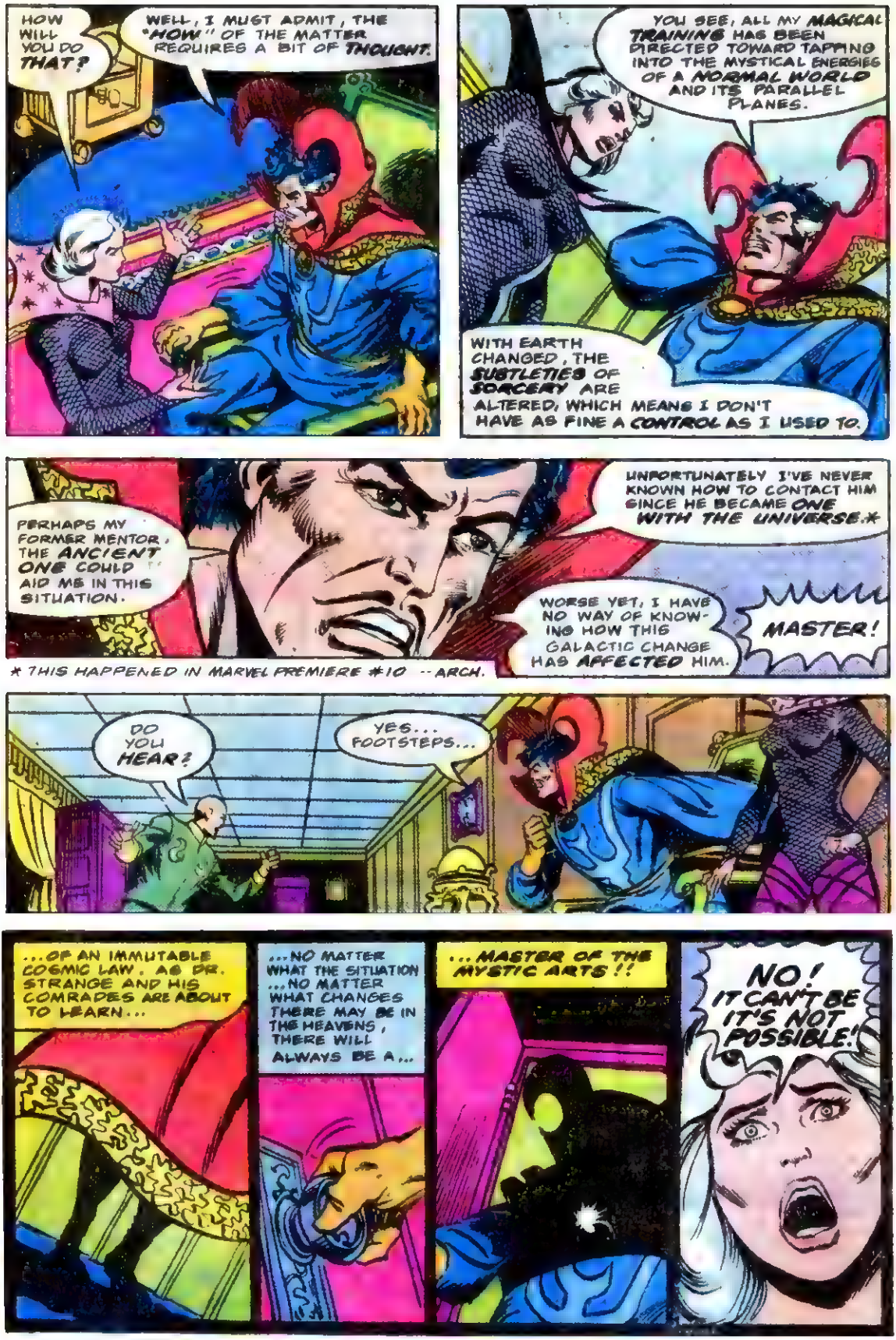
WHY DID YOU CHOOSE A PRIDE OF LIONS AS OUR DISGUISE?
BECAUSE WE MUST BEGIN TO THINK LIKE PREDATORS.
EVERYTHING THAT WE HOLD DEAR TO US IS BEING STOLEN BY THE CREATORS.
THESE FIENDS MUST BE STOPPED BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE.

STEPHEN... YOU SOUND SO ... COLD... SO RUTHLESS!
I BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT IS THE WAY THIS GAME MUST BE PLAYED.
THE STAKES ARE ASTRONOMICAL. WE DARE NOT LOSE.
UH?!
LOOK, IT'S DOC STRANGE!
HEY DOC, HOW ABOUT A CARD TRICK OR SOMETHING?


QUICKLY, CLEA, TO THE SKY!
THE CREATORS HAVE APPARENTLY GIVEN THEIR NEW SUBJECTS KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS THEY PREVIOUSLY LACKED. *
IT'S OBVIOUSLY A PETTY ACT ON THE PART OF THE CREATORS TO HINDER ME.
BUT WHY WOULD THEY BOTHER?
STEPHEN, LOOK!
* DR. STRANGE'S EXISTENCE WAS PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN TO THE WORLD AT LARGE BEFORE THIS.

ALAS, I FEARED I'D ALSO FIND THIS.
THE CHANGES ON THIS WORLD ARE BEGINNING TO AFFECT THE MINDS OF ITS PEOPLE.
IT'S TURNING THOSE SWORN TO UPHOLD THE LAW INTO MURDERERS AND TURNING MURDERERS INTO WORSE. THE REAL CHAOS IS ONLY BEGINNING.

THERE IS NOTHING MORE WE CAN DO HERE. LET US RETURN HOME.
BUT WHY ARE THE CREATORS CAUSING SUCH BEDLAM?
THAT I CAN ANSWER. IN CONFUSION THERE IS POWER TO BE GAINED.
I'M SURE OUR ENEMY HAS A SELECT GROUP OF FOLLOWERS WHO WILL REMAIN MENTALLY STABLE.
EVEN AS I SPEAK THEY ARE PROBABLY STEPPING INTO POSITIONS OF GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL.
THESE MEN WILL SEE TO IT THAT THINGS ARE RUN THE WAY THE CREATORS WANT.
WE ARE HOME. FOR SOME REASON OUR FOES HAVE NOT WREAKED HAVOC WITH MY SANCTUM.
AGAIN I WONDER WHY?
WELL, WHATEVER - THEIR REASON, THEY WILL SOON REGRET THIS OVERSIGHT!
FROM HERE IN MY STUDY, AMONG MY OBJECTS OF POWER AND TOMES OF KNOWLEDGE, I SHALL WAGE WAR AGAINST THE STARS THEMSELVES.


HOW WILL YOU DO THAT?
WELL, I MUST ADMIT, THE "HOW" OF THE MATTER REQUIRES A BIT OF THOUGHT.
YOU SEE, ALL MY MAGICAL TRAINING HAS BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD TAPPING INTO THE MYSTICAL ENERGIES OF A NORMAL WORLD AND ITS PARALLEL PLANES.
WITH EARTH CHANGED, THE SUBTLETIES OF SORCERY ARE ALTERED, WHICH MEANS I DON'T HAVE AS FINE A CONTROL AS I USED TO.
PERHAPS MY FORMER MENTOR, THE ANCIENT ONE COULD AID ME IN THIS SITUATION.
UNFORTUNATELY I'VE NEVER KNOWN HOW TO CONTACT HIM SINCE HE BECAME ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE.*
WORSE YET, I HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING HOW THIS GALACTIC CHANGE HAS AFFECTED HIM.
MASTER!
* THIS HAPPENED IN MARVEL PREMIERE #10 -- ARCH.
DO YOU HEAR?
YES... FOOTSTEPS...
...OF AN IMMUTABLE COSMIC LAW. AS DR. STRANGE AND HIS COMRADES ARE ABOUT TO LEARN...
...NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION ...NO MATTER WHAT CHANGES THERE MAY BE IN THE HEAVENS, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A...
...MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!!
NO! IT CAN'T BE IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!

NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, MY DEAR CLEA, BUT ACTUAL.
TO AVOID CONFUSION YOU MAY, FOR THE BRIEF TIME WE ARE TOGETHER, ADDRESS ME AS:
DOCTOR STRANGER YET!

AND I DO MEAN BRIEF TIME!
BY THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK!
HE ATTACKS WITHOUT WARNING! WITH POWER THE EQUAL OF MY OWN!
I MUST COUNTERATTACK QUICKLY...
... BUT FUTILELY, FOR LONG BEFORE THE MYSTIC'S ENERGY BOLTS REACH THEIR TARGET, A SHIELD OF THE SERAPHIM APPEARS TO PROTECT THE MYSTIC USURPER.
YET THE VALIANT MAN-SERVANT'S SACRIFICE NEARLY PROVES USELESS FOR THE HULKING BRUTE BRUSHES WONG ASIDE WITH MONSTROUS CONTEMPT AND LITTLE EFFORT.
... FOR DOCTOR STRANGE TO SNEAK IN A SOUL-SHATTERING BLAST OF MYSTIC MIGHT.
STILL, THE DIVERSION IS ENOUGH...
THIS ABOMINATION HAS THE MASTER ON THE DEFENSIVE.
I MUST GAIN DR. STRANGE THE PRECIOUS MOMENTS HE NEEDS TO TURN THE TIDE OF THIS BATTLE... EVEN IF IT COSTS ME MY LIFE!

BUT ALAS, IT IS NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH TO HALT THE WILD ANIMAL FORCE THAT POWERS THIS BIZARRE MYSTICAL MIMIC.
UNDAUNTED, THE ORIGINAL MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS PRESSES ON WITH HIS ATTACK... AN ASSAULT HE SENSES WILL FAIL...
...FOR HE ALREADY FEELS HIS FOE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE UNFAMILIAR SUBTLETIES THE COSMIC CHANGE THAT HAS INFECTED THE DYNAMICS OF MAGIC.
NOR IS IT STEPHEN STRANGE ALONE WHO REALIZES THIS.
CLEA! NO!
YOU'RE NO MATCH FOR HIM!
NOR ARE YOU, FOR THAT MATTER, DOCTOR.
YOU ARE BOTH RELICS FROM A DEAD PAST.
THE FUTURE IS UPON US, SO YOU MUST BOTH...

DIEEEEEEEE...
FIRED BY EMOTION AND GIVEN AN OPENING BY CLEA'S ACTIONS, DR. STRANGE LASHES OUT WITH PURE MYSTICAL FORCE.
UNSUBTLE, BUT EFFECTIVE.
YOU'VE WON!
NO, CLEA, I'VE WON NOTHING. I'VE MERELY SURVIVED BECAUSE OF YOU.
BEYOND THAT WINDOW LIES A WORLD IN AGONY.
VICTORY WILL BE OURS ONLY IF WE CAN STILL ITS PAIN.
TO DO THIS, I SENSE I MUST RETURN TO A TIME PAST.
RETURN TO A TIME WHEN I WAS BUT A PUPIL SAVORING AND PONDERING EVERY WORD OF HIS TEACHER.
OH, ANCIENT ONE, WHERE MIGHT YOU BE?
YOUR STUDENT SORELY NEEDS YOU NOW!
NEXT TO THE SENSES SHATTERING RETURN OF THE ANCIENT ONE!